

St Laurence's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105089
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	324155
Inspection date	18 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	82
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Hartley Michael
Headteacher	Mr John Walsh
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Laurence Drive Birkenhead Merseyside CH41 3JD

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	18 November 2008
Inspection number	324155

Telephone number
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0151 647 8409
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Age group	3-11
Inspection date	18 November 2008
Inspection number	324155

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how well pupils develop their writing skills; the impact of the low attendance of some pupils on their achievement; and the impact of support programmes on pupils' well-being, standards and achievement. The inspectors gathered evidence from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes. The school was observed at work and discussions were held with senior members of staff, the chair of governors and pupils. Replies to the parents' questionnaires were considered. Other aspects of the school's work were not considered in similar detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This small school is situated in an industrial area in central Birkenhead. Due to several reasons, including the school's location and changing patterns in local redevelopment and employment, the number of pupils on the school roll has reduced by one third in the last three years. Over 75% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, but there are two pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is through Nursery and Reception classes. The school currently has an acting headteacher. It holds the Activemark Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils achieve well both academically and in their personal development. The staff know each pupil very well and relate well to them. As a result pupils feel safe, secure and happy in school. Teachers and other adults provide extensive support to individuals or small groups of pupils, which is very effective in enabling them to catch up or extend their learning.

From starting points which are generally well below those expected for their age children make good progress in the EYFS. Nonetheless, by the time they start Year 1 pupils' skills and knowledge remain below national expectations. The school recognises this and provides useful extra opportunities for some pupils in Year 1 to join the Reception children in the afternoon to reinforce basic skills. The good start pupils make in the EYFS is built on satisfactorily in Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 2 standards remain below average, with some weaknesses evident in the standard of pupils' writing skills. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2, especially in Year 5 and Year 6, in response to high quality teaching and the extra support they receive. These factors enable them to make especially good gains in their reading and mathematical skills. Older pupils demonstrate considerable keenness for mathematical reasoning, show perseverance in problem-solving and develop secure calculation skills. By the end of Year 6 pupils have done well to reach average standards in English, mathematics and science overall, but standards in writing remain a little below average. Pupils have few good opportunities in subjects other than English to enthuse them for writing and to reinforce this skill. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their class-mates.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy school and relate well to each other. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and make good use of opportunities at play-times and in sporting activities both before and after school to take plenty of exercise. Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe and behave well in and around school. They have good opportunities to support each other and to contribute to the school and the wider community, for example, as school councillors and monitors. A key feature of this good sense of community is the innovative weekly pastoral care sessions which allow pupils of all ages to be taught a wide range of topics together in one class. Older pupils say they enjoy developing social and emotional skills this way through working with and helping out the younger ones. The school has many initiatives in place to promote attendance, which has been stubbornly low for several years. Despite a small improvement this term, this remains inadequate and shortfalls in attendance affect the progress of some pupils. The school's support programmes go some way to reducing the negative impact on pupils' learning. The good academic progress most pupils make in Key Stage 2 helps to raise their self-esteem and confidence, which sets them up well for later life.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. It promotes pupils' personal development well through the pastoral care sessions and a good range of visitors, such as the Kerbcraft team and the Life Education Bus, which provide useful advice on how pupils can stay safe. Pupils enjoy the good opportunities they have to extend their learning by visiting local museums and the Eureka science centre. The school has a satisfactory but interesting range of extra-curricular activities, including healthy cooking sessions. Extensive attention to the individual needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those at an early stage of learning to speak English, ensure these pupils make good progress.

The school has very effective liaison with outside agencies to remove or reduce barriers to learning for pupils with identified needs. Relevant required procedures are in place for child protection, safeguarding pupils and health and safety. School leaders track pupils' progress closely, which enables them to identify individual needs at an early stage and take the appropriate actions. Targets for pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 are regularly reviewed and frequently adjusted upwards to reflect the good progress they make over the key stage and to raise their expectations.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers manage pupils well and relate well to them. In the best lessons, expectations of pupils' behaviour and progress are high and lessons are planned very effectively to meet the needs of all pupils in the mixed-age classes. Teachers challenge pupils well to develop their thinking skills and use a good range of assessment techniques, including oral feedback and detailed marking, to help pupils keep up and improve their work. Writing frames and examples of model answers are used well to guide pupils on how to structure their work. In some lessons where these exemplary features are less evident the pace of learning drops.

The school benefits from good quality leadership and management. The acting headteacher and his senior leadership team are highly experienced practitioners. They possess the good range of complementary skills required to guide the school through the present uncertainties, due to pressures on the school budget caused by the falling roll. They are taking effective measures to integrate new teachers into the work of the school. Governance is satisfactory in ensuring statutory requirements are met, but governors have still to fully develop their role as critical friends to the school. The school has maintained the good quality of provision since its previous inspection.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children join the part-time Nursery, their skills and knowledge are well below those expected for their age, especially in communication skills and in their social and emotional development. Children make good gains in all areas of their learning and by the time they join Year 1 the gap with national expectations has narrowed considerably. The teacher and other adults question pupils well to extend their thinking. They promote speaking and listening skills effectively through a clear focus on the acquisition and practice of key words. The teacher has high expectations of children's behaviour and provides a good range of opportunities for children to learn how to work well together. Children generally respond well to this lead. They behave well and develop positive attitudes towards their work and good relationships with their class-mates, although sometimes they are reluctant to take turns and share. Welfare arrangements are secure and good relationships are developed with parents who are appreciative of the good start their children are given. Children's achievements are assessed daily, using an appropriate range of evidence, to inform planning for the class as a whole and language catch-up programmes for small groups. Leadership is very effective in analysing provision and in taking action to address areas for development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide better opportunities in subjects other than English to improve pupils' standards in writing.
- Ensure the target for pupils' attendance is met.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Laurence's Catholic Primary School, Birkenhead, CH41 3JD

I am writing to thank you for your help when we inspected your school recently and to tell you what we found out. You told us you enjoyed your lessons and the activities before and after school. A few of you are already stars at table-tennis! You also told us you felt safe and well looked after by the staff in school. By the end of our visit we had lots of reasons for agreeing with your views that yours is a good school.

After the good start the younger children have in Nursery and Reception, you are helped to make good progress in reading, science, and mathematics. Your work comes along very well in Year 5 and Year 6. This is especially the case in mathematics, where you are really keen to work hard and solve problems. You are not so keen on writing and as your progress lags a bit here I have asked the staff to provide you with more exciting chances to improve your writing skills. One of the good things about learning in a small school is that the staff know you all very well. They check on your progress closely and step in quickly to help you if, for any reason, you are falling behind with your work or need an extra push to do as well as you can. This extra attention also helps you to build up your confidence. Some of you do not attend school regularly and this often means you do less well than you could.

The staff teach you well. You get good advice on how to set out your answers and to improve your work and staff work hard to make sure you learn well together, for example, in the pastoral care sessions. The senior teachers are very experienced and keep a good watch over the school. You can help them by making sure you do not miss school and by trying your hardest with your writing.

St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105091
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308763
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Eithne Proffitt

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lynn Ireland
Headteacher	Mrs Stevenson
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2003
School address	Park Grove Birkenhead Merseyside CH41 2TD
Telephone number	0151 6478404
Fax number	0151 6477348

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2007
Inspection number	308763

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a school of average size. The majority of its pupils live in the centre of Birkenhead, an area of social and economic challenge. A very high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals and the percentage of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above national averages. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, although the numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language are increasing. The school is developing close links with the local children's centre situated on-site and has recently been awarded the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It provides high standards of care and an effective education, which enables pupils to make good progress and grow in confidence and self-esteem. The school is well thought of in the local community and has strong partnerships with other schools and agencies. Its calm atmosphere and emphasis on pupils' personal and emotional development ensure the pupils have positive attitudes to learning and that relationships throughout the school are highly productive. As a result, pupils enjoy school, get on well with each other and make good progress in their learning. Parents overwhelmingly support the school. A typical view is that, 'It does everything in its power to make sure the children are well cared for and given the education every child deserves.'

The school community have together come through a most distressing period in recent years. The appointment of the current headteacher has influenced strongly the ethos of the school and she has brought an infectious commitment to school improvement and change. The senior management team is forward-thinking, reflective and honest in its evaluation processes and has a strong appetite for growth and change. With the good support of consultants of the local authority, the headteacher has assisted all staff and governors in their work. This has brought about some rapid improvements, effectively demonstrating the school's good capacity to improve further.

Children start school with knowledge and skills well below those expected of their age. Nonetheless, they achieve well in the Foundation Stage and have a good start to their school life. This is because teaching focuses strongly on developing the children's social skills and the clear emphasis on learning through play. This approach continues through Year 1 and helps pupils to build successfully on their previous learning so by the end of Year 2, the good progress of these pupils is assured. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress overall and standards in English and mathematics are broadly average. Standards in science are not as high and continue to be a relative weakness with pupils making satisfactory progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified quickly and the support they receive is effective.

The quality of teaching and learning are good overall, and consistent monitoring by the headteacher has assured that focused areas are scrutinised regularly. Initiatives set in place such as clearly defined and explained expectations of pupils in lessons and more probing questioning techniques are already showing a positive impact. However, progress in learning is sometimes not quite as effective because teachers do not consistently set individual targets for pupils to achieve. In addition, marking and feedback of pupils' work do not always give clear pointers for improvement.

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs of the pupils. A good range of educational visits and visitors and a keen involvement in sporting activities have a positive impact on pupils' learning. The pastoral care and support are the driving force of the school and make a crucial contribution to the positive attitudes that the pupils demonstrate, although their academic guidance is not as well developed.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher provide an energetic lead in the drive to move the school forward. Areas for improvement have been clearly identified and prioritised. Middle managers have begun to take action to improve the provision in their subject areas but systems for checking and improving pupils' achievement

are not yet fully in place. Governance is strong and challenging and is having a positive influence on school improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When the children start Nursery, their skills are typically well below those expected of children of their age, especially in language, communication and personal and social development. With encouragement, the children settle securely into the class routines and make good use of the wide range of activities presented to them. Staff have high expectations of the children and in a caring, family environment, patiently teach the required social skills. The children's progress in this aspect of learning is a strength of the provision and literally lays the foundations for their future learning. Children with little or no spoken English are well cared for by a bi-lingual assistant. She supports their language development and ensures that progress for these children, not just in literacy, can be acknowledged and celebrated. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Along with the determined lead of the headteacher, staff now have a more accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the provision. Rapid and effective steps have been taken to improve the children's learning experiences. By the time children join Year 1, they have made good progress and their levels of skills and understanding are just below those expected. The good practice in Nursery and Reception now weaves seamlessly through into Year 1, ensuring that teaching and learning effectively meet all the children's needs. Provision for outdoor learning has been restricted by the nature of the school site. The outdoor space is used to extend children's experiences but the school has further plans to assure the children's full entitlement to the outdoor curriculum.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in science.
- Improve the use of individual targets and the consistency of marking and feedback for pupils, so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to next to improve further.
- Develop the role of subject coordinators to enable them to take a more active role in improving achievement and standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good throughout the school. By the time pupils start Year 1 most are working below the expected levels for their age. By the end of Year 2, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is good. Achievement is good in Key Stage 2 and standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average in English and mathematics. At present not enough attention is given to developing pupils' problem-solving and investigative skills in science and this is holding back their progress. School data shows that currently the additional support provided by the school through small group work is having a positive impact on pupil progress, which is improving. Pupils with additional learning needs are identified early on and the school provides well-targeted individual or group support that ensures their good progress. Trained teaching assistants and specific bi-lingual support successfully promote the confidence, self-esteem and good levels of achievement of the growing number of pupils with English as an additional language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and reflects the mission statement of the school. Relationships with adults and other pupils are firmly based on respect for all. Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong and behave well in and out of lessons. Pupils welcome opportunities to make a contribution to the work of the school, for example, through the school council and the peer mediators. These contribute well to the development of pupils' decision-making and negotiating skills. Parents are pleased that their children thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Whilst attendance is below the national average, it is a rising picture. The school, with the support of the home-school development worker and the local authority, maintains a close overview, calling parents and pupils to task regarding absence and lateness at the earliest opportunity. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is increasing and the school works hard to ensure that all pupils are prepared for life in our culturally diverse society. 'The school organises a range of activities to raise pupils' awareness of the cultural and ethnic communities in our area,' is the positive comment of some parents. Pupils are safety-conscious from an early age and understand the importance of eating healthily and exercising. The school has a very strong history of sporting achievement of which the pupils are understandably proud. The school has recently been awarded the Activemark in recognition of their strength in this field. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology satisfactorily prepare them for the next stages in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Caring relationships generate positive attitudes to learning. Lessons are well-planned with a clear focus on what the children need to learn. The best teaching is characterised by good class organisation, effective management of pupils' behaviour well-paced teaching and stimulating and interesting activities. These are all carefully matched to pupils' needs and focused questioning is used well to probe pupils' understanding. Here, teachers are secure in their knowledge of what pupils can do and what they need to learn next and are successful in using technology to engage and motivate pupils. In addition, there are good opportunities for younger pupils to talk to their friends about their work, supporting each other in their learning. Teaching assistants provide an additional layer of teaching, especially in supporting pupils who find learning difficult. This extra help ensures that these pupils make the most of their lessons and make similar progress to that of their peers. There are, however, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Sometimes, introductory sessions are too long, leading to pupils' attention wandering, concentration to wane and there being insufficient time to complete activities and consolidate learning. Although there are some good examples of marking to check the extent to which pupils have understood the lesson, it often fails to show them exactly how to improve their work and, consequently, does not sufficiently move their learning on.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school accurately judges its curriculum as satisfactory. It promotes pupils' basic skills and meets statutory requirements. The personal, social and health education programme is successful in raising pupils' self-esteem and helps them to stay healthy and safe. Pupils are enthusiastic

about the provision for physical education and the after-school sports clubs, proudly talking about the school's achievement of the Activemark. A high emphasis is placed in the timetable on literacy and numeracy, and other subjects are given satisfactory attention. In science not enough attention is given to developing pupils' problem-solving and investigative skills which would increase the level of challenge for the pupils and bring their skills up to scratch. Innovative developments in the curriculum in the use of cross-curricular themes are at present underdeveloped. As a result, there are missed opportunities in making the pupil's learning more interesting and relevant. Pupils' basic skills in information and communication technology are promoted satisfactorily but are not effectively used as a tool to raise standards in all subjects. Work in the classroom is enhanced through a good range of educational visits and visitors. These have a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment and achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Teachers know their pupils well and work closely with parents to ensure that the level of pastoral support is good. Pupils love coming to school. 'It's a great place to be', typifies the views of many. They say that they feel safe, like their teachers and would happily go to any one of them if they had any concerns. Child protection arrangements are in place and health and safety checks and risk assessments are carried out. Links with outside agencies are well developed and arrangements for supporting any vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well organised. Good induction procedures help the youngest children to quickly settle into school. Secure transition arrangements to the high schools ensure that pupils make a smooth transfer into the next phases of their education. Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory. Pupils are set short term targets that clearly indicate the next steps in their learning so that they know exactly what it is they need to do to progress further. Marking is inconsistent across the school and fails to give pupils pointers to help them understand how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide a new and committed leadership. With the support of the local authority they have pinpointed areas of relative weakness and ensured leaders and managers at all levels and all teaching staff are fully aware of what needs to be done to bring about improvement. There is clear guidance about how the school should do this. Action has been taken but the full impact of this is yet to be seen in pupil's standards and achievements. Self-evaluation is much improved. All staff and governors are fully involved in identifying strategies that they feel will bring about improvement. Middle managers are now taking increasing responsibility for their subjects but they are not yet effective in using rigorous checks to drive learning forward. School development planning successfully identifies key priorities and is firmly linked to performance management but the full impact of this on improving provision and pupils' progress has yet to be realised. The school is now setting more challenging targets to raise standards and this is currently being supported by the effective management of extra staffing. The headteacher has the overwhelming support of parents as they feel she is maintaining the supportive nature of the school. The school runs smoothly and financial management is good. Governors have an informed understanding of the school's

needs and a vision and commitment to improvement. They fulfil their role of critical friend well and confidently challenge the school to explain its actions.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and are very grateful to all of you who chatted to us - I know you are proud to be part of St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School. We found your school to be a good school because of your headteacher, teachers and helpers but most of all, because of you!

Here are some of the good things about your school that we noticed.

- You are very polite, friendly and obviously enjoy coming to school.
- Your behaviour is good and you get on really well with your teachers and your friends.
- You feel safe in school and your teachers, teaching assistants and all your other helpers look after you well.
- You try hard in lessons, especially if you are asked to work in pairs or groups.
- You are particularly good sportsmen and women!
- Your school gives you lots of activities outside the classrooms, through visits and visitors, that help you learn in a really fun way.
- Your headteacher is really keen to make your school an even better place to be.

There are some things that can be done to help you in your work, so I have asked all your teachers to:

- make sure that you get better in science
- check more carefully the progress that you are making in all your work and to talk to you about it. To set you clear targets for improvement and to make really sure that you know how well you are doing, how you can improve your work and what your next steps are for learning are.

I have also asked those teachers who look after subjects to look carefully at what they can do to make your learning and skills even better.

Thank you once again for being so kind and friendly, we really enjoyed seeing you at work and play!



Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105086
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 287122
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Jane Hughes

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Price Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Birkenhead
Age range of pupils	4–11		Merseyside CH41 8DU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6523366
Number on roll (school)	215	Fax number	0151 6523366
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr James Shannon
		Headteacher	Mrs Elaine McGunigall
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006	Inspection number 287122
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school in an area with significant disadvantage. More than half the pupils are eligible for free school meals, a far higher than average number. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Although a small proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational need, a far larger than average proportion have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. On site, pre-school provision is now helping young children to join the school with better personal and social skills. Current Year 6 pupils are the final year group not to experience this provision. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award and two Achievement Awards (2000, 2001). It uses Excellence in Cities funding to support the role of the home- school development worker and to part fund the work of the specialist sports coach.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding elements. The school's own evaluation of its work is generally accurate, although it is overly self-critical in its judgements of pupils' personal development and the quality of the curriculum. Inspectors judge both aspects to be outstanding. The school has improved significantly over the past six years because good, stable leadership and management provide a relentless focus on improving standards and raising pupils' achievement. Issues from the last inspection have been tackled effectively. Efficient governors ensure that the school provides good value for money. Coupled with a strengthening academic profile, these characteristics give the school good capacity for further improvement. The school's caring routines reflect its core mission values. The well-being of pupils is at its heart. Pupils develop a strong working knowledge of how to live safe and healthy lives. They know what characterises productive citizenship, and possess academic and personal skills vital to their future economic well-being.

Pupils do well here because challenging and supportive leadership at all levels ensures good quality teaching and learning. High order personal and social skills also support pupils' good achievement. Pupils arrive in Reception with skills below national expectations, particularly in their language and mathematical skills. Their personal, social and emotional skills are more developed because of the impact of on-site pre-school provision. Good provision in the Foundation Stage helps young children to settle quickly and achieve well. By Year 6, pupils attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents good achievement for all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, relatively fewer higher attaining pupils reach the higher levels of attainment. Teachers do not yet make full use of the data available to them to check the progress of such groups of pupils. An outstanding curriculum provides a first class support vehicle for strong teaching. The innovative extended day, coupled with opportunities to learn French and Spanish from Reception upwards and expert sports coaching, offer all pupils the very best opportunities to widen their experiences. Parents understandably place high value on these opportunities as they prepare pupils well for life beyond school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from vulnerable backgrounds are very well supported by skilful teaching assistants and experienced special needs staff. However, within this positive teaching picture, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. It does not always offer enough guidance to pupils on how to improve their work and so attain the higher levels.

There is an overarching atmosphere of care and support for the whole school family, including parents and the wider community. The school fosters a strong partnership with parents through various home-school links. For example, the very successful family learning programme is a key strength and demonstrates effective use of funding to help parents improve their employment prospects.

Parents say the school 'bends over backwards' to support their needs. Increasingly, parents go on to study for new qualifications and a more secure future. The school's

work with outside agencies is very successful. First class partnerships with various providers ensure that pupils receive the best possible support at times of real need.

Excellent relationships between adults and pupils ensure that pupils always feel valued. As a result, their personal development is exemplary. Pupils develop into confident and trustworthy individuals who value their school and the wider community. The school does its very best to promote regular attendance through the role of the home-school development worker. Attendance levels are improving, although a few pupils' attendance remains below average. Good levels of care, guidance and support nurture pupils and effectively safeguard their well-being. Pupils are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about their own learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards reached by the more able pupils at Year 6 so more attain the higher levels.
- Ensure that teachers' marking provides pupils with clear next steps in their learning so they know how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most children enter the Reception year with weaknesses in their communication, language, literacy and mathematical skills. Overall, their skills are below those expected for their age. Children settle very well and make good progress because of the relative strength of their initial personal and social skills. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage because of good teaching and high expectations, although standards by Year 1 remain below national expectations. In 2006, standards in Year 2 rose considerably and were above average, although the improvement was not quite as strong in writing. As a result of more targeted teaching, Year 6 standards rose sharply in 2006 and were in line overall with the national average. Year 6 English scores were the best ever for the school. Standards were above the national average in English and mathematics, exceeding challenging targets. This represents good achievement by all groups of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good rates of progress as others because of the effective support they receive to meet their targets. However, the school recognises that it still has work to do to raise even further the attainment and achievement of the more able pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy their learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The parish priest is closely involved in school life and community links are very strong. Pupils establish strongly supportive relationships with staff and each other. Older pupils have the maturity to recognise that behaviour is much improved. They are familiar with staff reminding them: 'Your

behaviour is your responsibility.' Pupils have an increasing appreciation of a diverse range of cultural issues. Lessons often provide links to their own historical heritage and this brings learning to life for them. Specialist sports coaching ensures that regular exercise and eating healthily are a high priority and that pupils learn good habits for their future well-being. A few pupils have fractured attendance patterns, reducing the overall attendance levels. The school, through the home-school development worker, does all it can to improve attendance levels.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Knowledgeable teachers plan interesting activities. Pupils say these 'make learning fun' and they clearly enjoy their learning. Teachers' questioning is a real strength as it encourages the active involvement of pupils in their learning and improves their understanding in lessons. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to questions and remain engaged in their work, so making the most of lessons. There is good use of interactive whiteboards to stimulate pupils' interest. Teachers and skilful teaching assistants work well together and offer vibrant support for pupils of differing abilities. This ensures that all pupils are equally motivated to learn. Nevertheless, adults do not use learning objectives consistently enough in lessons to involve pupils fully in their own learning or to assess their own progress. Marking is positive, but inconsistent in the way it illustrates how pupils might improve their work. All adults promote first class relationships with and between pupils. They manage pupils' behaviour very consistently and set rigorous challenges and high expectations. These draw out pupils' learning and help them achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum extends well beyond what is required. Basic literacy and numeracy skills develop well through topics relevant to pupils and these engage their curiosity. The curriculum caters well for all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, through well supported small- group sessions. The innovative extended day provision enables every pupil to participate daily in extra-curricular activities such as art, music, team games and modern foreign languages. An extensive range of after-school activities from Year 1 upwards improves pupils' skills still further. Specialist sports coaching brings outstanding benefits as it improves pupils' and teachers' skills in lessons and after school. Pupils delight in winning local sports tournaments while embracing the benefits of active lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Caring staff ensure that pupils are happy and safe in school as pupils' welfare is of the highest importance. Child protection procedures are in place and checks on staff follow the most recent guidance. The school is mindful of the needs of the most vulnerable. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive particularly effective support to achieve as well as other pupils because specialist staff identify individual needs at an early stage. The school promotes healthy and safe living well through a clear focus on nutrition and active living. Emotional health receives increasing attention and builds pupils' self-esteem. Staff gather data regularly to monitor individual pupils' progress. Although the school does this well, newer tracking systems do not yet identify specific groups of pupils, such as higher attainers, in order to check their progress and ensure that each group receives the most appropriate support. Parents say that the school cares for and guides their children very well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Parents 'cannot praise the headteacher highly enough'. The leadership guides the school very effectively. As a result, pupils achieve well and standards are rising. There is outstanding commitment to improvement and equality of opportunity at all levels so pupils reach increasingly challenging targets. Even so, there is more to be done in enabling all pupils to achieve their best, particularly the more able pupils. Subject leaders are clear about how they effect improvement. Effective systems monitor, evaluate and improve all aspects of the school's work. For example, the school's improvement plan sets out simply what needs to develop and how this will happen so staff and governors are clear. Careful financial management along with highly effective administrative, lunchtime and ancillary staff ensure that the school runs smoothly. Governors offer appropriate challenge and support to ensure further improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your welcome when we visited your school. It was a pleasure to see you working in lessons and enjoying learning so much. Our initial tour with your Head Girl and Head Boy was a super introduction to your school. We saw how enthusiastic you all are about the fun activities and learning experiences your teachers organise. We were particularly impressed with all the art and craft work you do with visiting artists.

Many of you told us how much you enjoy being members of the OLSE family. You feel that the school gets better and better. We agree that there are many things to be proud of in your good school. You do better in your tests and achieve well. Last year, Year 6 got the best results ever in English, so well done to them. Everyone is very kind and friendly in your busy and cheerful school. Specialist teachers help you and your teachers to develop new skills, such as in PE: you relish the opportunity to play in local sports tournaments - and you're winning now! All the adults take very good care of you and help you with any problems. Your parents told us how happy you all are at school.

One of the reasons for our visit was to see how your school could improve. We have asked all the adults in school to help you do even better in your English, mathematics and science work so everyone who can reach higher standards by Year 6. We have also asked your teachers to give you a clearer idea of how to make each piece of work even better when they mark your books.

You can be very helpful by continuing to do your best, working and playing hard. Some of you do not come to school every day and so you miss lots of work and fun with your friends. Try to remind everyone at home that you need to come to school every single day. We are sure you will remember this because it's so important - and you can help to win rewards for your class in the attendance competition.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Birkenhead

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105092
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308764
Inspection date	20 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Mark Madeley

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	459
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Annette Roberts, JP
Headteacher	Mr S Dainty
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Woodchurch Road Prenton Merseyside CH43 5UT
Telephone number	0151 6526781
Fax number	0151 6701843

Age group	3-11
Inspection date	20 May 2008
Inspection number	308764

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of the school's management; the teachers' work on pupils' current progress and standards, and on their personal development and well-being. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation; national published assessment data and the school's records of pupils' progress; lesson observations; interviews with staff, pupils and the chair of the governing body; the school's policy documents; and parent's questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

This school is much larger than the average primary school. It serves two local parishes. About one third of pupils come from Oxton with the other two thirds coming from the less advantaged areas of Birkenhead, Prenton, Claughton and Tranmere. Ninety five percent of the pupils are of White British heritage. The numbers of pupils from minority ethnic heritages are relatively small but are growing. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average, though the number of pupils actually taking their entitlement is below average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which enables all of its pupils to achieve well. It also gives them exceptional care, guidance and support. As a consequence, pupils are happy at school, work hard for their teachers and make good progress in their learning. They, and their parents, are confident that they are being kept safe and well as the required safeguarding procedures are in place. Particular strengths of the outstanding academic support the pupils receive are the quality of marking in English which praises as well as explaining to pupils how they can improve further, also, the very effective use made of individual targets for pupils which they say, 'helps us know what to do to reach the next level'.

Overall, most children start school with skills which are in line with those typical for their age. Effective provision helps them make good progress in the Foundation Stage. By the start of Year 1 their attainment in the six areas of learning is higher than would be expected for their age. Through Years 1 to 6, pupils make good progress because the quality of teaching and the curriculum are good. Sessions are well planned to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils are asked consistently to explain their answers and this helps consolidate their learning. Particularly effective use is made of visits, artefacts and food tasting sessions, for example, to help pupils understand what life was like in the past. The pupils confidently use their computer skills in a wide range of subjects. By Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are above average. These high standards have been maintained for five years.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They behave well in class, are keen to learn and work well in groups. They have a good understanding of their own culture. However, an awareness of the multicultural nature of British society is not quite so strong, particularly at a time when more pupils of minority ethnic heritage are being admitted to the school. The school council is very effective in making the school a better place for all. The work of the eco-committee, play leaders and those who help at the 'buddy bus stop' is outstanding. Also outstanding are the very strong links with the parishes and the work the pupils do for charitable causes. The school makes good use of visitors and sports coaches to help pupils understand how to stay safe and to keep fit and well. The pupil uptake for the extensive range of sports clubs is high. Additional music provision is good; pupils take part in the choir, including performing outside of school. Many pupils take up the opportunity to learn an instrument. The new drumming classes for Year 6 are extremely popular and the school regularly puts on plays and musicals.

Under the good leadership of the headteacher the school has improved significantly since the last inspection, especially the Foundation Stage provision. Good management by all staff with responsibilities results in effective teamwork. For example, Key Stage 2 staff, led by the assessment team, identified the need to improve standards in science; they are being successful in this, particularly for the more able pupils. The quality of teaching is good and is improving because senior staff check on it regularly. Where necessary, effective support and additional training are given to staff. The school has high expectations of all pupils. Their progress is checked rigorously and the information gathered is used exceptionally well. Particular strengths are the demanding targets set for Year 6 pupils and the early identification of pupils who need further challenge or additional support. Continuous improvements made to the school, plus the astute forward planning, indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Good governance ensures that the school's management is held to account and that the relatively low level of finances are used to best effect. The school gives good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision in the Foundation Stage helps children achieve well. Children quickly learn the routines of the Foundation Stage 1 class because induction procedures are comprehensive. They engage in many exciting play activities which encourage them to make choices and to stay with tasks for increasing lengths of time. Input by all staff is of good quality so that children extend their language and social skills. Number is taught exceptionally well with children able to count and identify numerals to ten. In the Foundation Stage 2 class, the day is well planned. Activities in the classroom give children good opportunities to develop their independence and extend their concentration. Staff are often found joining in with children's games so as to improve children's language skills. Children make very good progress in acquiring knowledge of letters sounds and of early writing skills. The outdoor area is not as well developed as that for the Foundation Stage 1 class and presents fewer challenges. The Foundation Stage team, capably led by the manager, has been successful in making significant improvements to provision since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the outdoor learning environment in the Foundation Stage 2 classes so that it is as challenging to children's learning as their classrooms.
- Promote pupils' awareness of the multicultural nature of British society further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Birkenhead, Prenton, CH43 5UT

I enjoyed my recent inspection of your school because you made me so welcome. You spoke confidently when sharing your views of the school with me. I agree with you that yours is a good school. It helps you make good progress in English, mathematics and science and reach standards by the end of Key Stage 2 which are above average. The school has a good team of staff who make sure that learning is interesting. They also take you on a wide range of visits, like the Year 6 trip to North Wales, and help you stay fit and healthy through the many extra sports clubs. The school is well led and managed by your headteacher and his senior managers.

The school also helps you mature as individuals and learn to help each other. You told me that you really enjoyed school because the teachers are helpful to you. I thought the way that older pupils help everyone in school was especially impressive. You behave well and I saw some good cooperation in lessons, for example, groups in a Year 3 class wrote an imaginative description of a character from a story. The school brings in people to talk to you so that you know how to keep safe.

Your headteacher and his staff have brought about significant improvement since the last inspection. I have asked him to do two things which will make the school an even better place in which to learn:

- improve the use made of the outdoor area in the Foundation Stage 2 classes
- make sure that you know more about the broad range of cultures of people living in Britain today.

You can help your school to improve further by continuing to be kind and helpful to each other and by continuing to work hard towards your learning targets.

Thank you very much for all your help during the inspection. I wish you and the school well for the future.